

Being prepared— it's not just for Boy Scouts



Leslie Peterson

by **Leslie Peterson**

Five months ago, I began working on CSO's Y2K Contingency Planning Team. Like other teams across Western, our job was to identify risks and develop plans for dealing with problems stemming from the transition to Year 2000.

Ironically, January was also the time my furnace decided to break down. It was, of course, a cold night. In our vain attempts to restart the furnace (which required turning off its power), my husband and I found ourselves buffeted by 50-mph winds while trying to get into an outside circuit breaker box, using a flashlight with failing batteries as our only light source. At that moment, it dawned on me that I wasn't prepared for a minor domestic disturbance, much less a Y2K catastrophe!

Fortunately, five months down the road most of us realize, while some isolated problems may occur on the millenium's rollover, full-blown, nationwide disasters are very unlikely. Like most agencies and business concerns,

Western has worked hard to be "Y2K ready." Our mission-critical systems are compliant; we're part of an industrywide program to address Y2K problems; and many of our co-workers have been diligently conducting end-to-end testing and putting detailed contingency plans in place. Come Dec. 31, Western—and most other electric

utilities—will be ready.

On the home front, I'm also more prepared. That chilly night without heat drove home a clear message. Domestic disasters can occur at any time. That's the message the American Red Cross and other agencies are trying to get across. Wind storms, tornadoes, ice and blizzards can descend without warning. We all need to be prepared 365 days a year.

Exactly how you prepare is a matter of personal preference. For some, it may be a three-day supply of food and water and backup batteries for flashlights. Others may prefer a detailed checklist for everything from medical prescriptions and insurance policies to bedding and extra clothing for each member of the family.

A good place to get some ideas on preparing for any disaster is the Red Cross Web site. By logging on to **www.redcross.org**, you can quickly find links to Y2K preparedness and disaster planning. These Web pages give detailed descriptions on how to develop a personal disaster preparedness plan and list supplies you might want to have on hand. You may not wish to include everything, but reading through the suggestions is good food for thought. Like the proverbial Boy Scout, we all should "Be Prepared."

(Note: Peterson is a public affairs specialist in Golden.)



More help is available

To find more information on Y2K and disaster planning:

- ◆ Contact your local American Red Cross chapter—it has several publications and brochures with helpful information.
- ◆ Check the Web site of your state,

city, local community or public utilities—many have Y2K Web pages with information on local efforts and community involvement groups.

Log on to other Y2K specific Web sites such as the Cassandra Project at **www.cassandrproject.org** or the Citizens Action Guide at **www.utne.com/y2k**. Both specialize in personal and community Y2K planning.